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## **Specifics of Using E-Educational Resources in Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language**

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**Abstract.** This article assesses the effectiveness of modern approaches in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language (Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom). The author reviews the most popular electronic educational resources in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language, paying particular attention to such two foreign resources, but gaining popularity among

teachers in this field, such as Moodle and Kahoot. The author also concludes the advantages that electronic educational resources provide in teaching Russian as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** Russian as a foreign language, electronic platforms, Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom

## **1. Introduction**

The use of e-educational resources offers a number of possibilities to make lessons of Russian more diverse, interesting and motivating. Sometimes materials may be interesting on their own, but also they may be of interest because of their new nature. It is important to admit that e-materials in teaching sometimes may seem efficient only because of a special and new nature of a multi modal platform that they present. The positive influence of using informational and communicative technologies (ICT) often depends on what decisions are taken by independent teachers regarding their use.

All that attracts students' interest and attention will be useful from the educational point of view as interest is closely related to motivation [Kazantseva, Valiakhmetova, Minisheva, 2016; Bower, 2019]. To assure that digital materials be relevant for a group of students, the content of the materials shall be related to what students already know about the language and their purposes. In general, duly developed and thoroughly selected e-materials that take into account the age group and therefore are more relevant for a class will be more motivating for students.

Recent research has described the increasing role of educational activity out of the classroom in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language via hybrid educational schemes and integration of e-education with classic education in the classroom. This topic has been studied mainly by foreign authors due to the fact that use of e-educational resources in teaching foreign languages is developed due to actively used foreign online-platforms.

## **2. Material and methods**

In this research we make an attempt to present specifics and assess the use of e-educational resources in the course of teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language. To achieve the research purpose the following methods were used: analysis of a review of scientific literature, study of modern e-resources for the use of technologies in an educational process, and inclusion of the author's pedagogical experience and data analysis.

In accordance with the purpose we may specify the following research aims:

- to assess the effectiveness of modern approaches in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language (Station Rotation, Flipped Classroom);
- to review the most popular electronic educational resources in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language;
- to focus on the advantages that electronic educational resources provide.

The research is based on scientific papers of teachers researching the following issues:

- use of informational and communicational technologies for educational purposes,
- modern concepts of mixed education,
- theory and methodology of teaching foreign languages.

### **3. Results and discussion**

E-educational resources are mainly connected with interactivity in education. Interactivity is interaction of professional communication participants with each other as well as the way they interact with the object (content) of communication, being oral or written interactive text. The processing of actions (understanding, perception, assignment, assessment, etc.) of an interactive text is an approximate basis for other types of activities and becomes a structural component of other types of activities (efficient activity enabling the translating of a sense of an initial text into any other form of its reproduction: monologue, dialogue, polylogue, audio visualization). Their focus on formation foreign language communicative competence, necessary personnel for successful performance of professional activity shall be selection criteria for content, methods and technologies realized in e-educational resources..

Paul Lennon in his book *The Foundations of Teaching English as a Foreign Language* several times presents elements of final pedagogical events such as online — links, asynchronous network training, e-mail, online assessment and testing, tutorship and private tutoring [Lennon, 2020]. The research includes portals, synchronous network training, e-systems supporting performance, simulation, knowledge management, independent content on CD-ROM, practicing communities, video files, virtual labs and chats. The author notes that these new tools satisfy student needs, improve training quality, decrease time necessary for a student to achieve educational purpose, improve the quality of educational content and materials and improve the capacity to re-use educational content and materials. These tools also decrease the cost

of program implementation, make matching of educational components with purposes more efficient and decrease costs of program development,

E-educational resources are used in various modern systems and approaches to teaching Russian as a foreign language. One such approach is Station Rotation, whose purpose is to teach the main four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students deeply dive into the work and language and a teacher acts as a facilitator [Doubet, 2015; Evseeva and Solozhenko, 2015]. During a lesson based on the Station Rotation approach various e-resources are used. For example, in a lesson “Specifics of national Russian cuisine” infographics, images and graphics in Russian as well as videos of native speakers related to eating habits and Russian cuisine are used. This leads to efficient cultural comparison between eating habits in Russia and other countries. Culture of a learned language becomes a topic core and students may take it into account and learn it. Station Rotation includes 4 stations: reading, writing, speaking and auditing.

During the stage of reading skills training you may focus on a short task on a reading or infographics in Russian with questions for understanding that may be open-ended or true/ false. You may ask students to prepare their own questions based on the text. During the auditing stage you may focus on audio, a video in YouTube or a song in Russian. Students may ask questions related to the topic of the lesson. During the speaking stage you may publish oral tips for students during answering questions or in the course of their dialogue with each other. This is necessary for good interpersonal exchange. In such dialogues you may allow students to define the time themselves — you may ask them, for example, to spend two minutes for each question. This pushes them to continue using language and promotes them to use by-passes when they do not know some words. Questions and answers may be recorded in a special software and later be listened to and corrected, if necessary.

If students work independently, they may participate in a recorded simulated conversation or record their answers on their devices. In a simulated conversation a teacher usually records his voice and students shall listen and answer in specified periods of time. This is difficult as students do not control the conversation and shall listen attentively in order to give due answers. One more variant is to ask students to record themselves during answering questions or invitation. For example, they may use Garage Band or Vocaroo and then share their recordings with a teacher.

During the stage of the working-out and improvement of writing skills you may use various e-resources which present some images related to the topic and ask students to tell a story about one of the images or in detail describe their reactions to it. Depending on the situation, technologies may be implemented in all four mentioned stations. If students have access to devices, they may answer questions after reading texts using Padlet or answer questions on their understanding using Google forms. The Station Rotation approach has some advantages. Firstly, the educational performance of students is constantly increasing during station change. Such stations enable students to move forward in their learning, cooperate and think critically as well as practice every communicative skill in Russian. Secondly, the Station Rotation approach enables a teacher to act as a mediator. When students work and move from one station to another, there is a possibility to check every group or an individual student, ask about their progress, what lessons they like most and why, etc. These checks assist a teacher in assessment of performance and develop interaction in the class. During such learning, students may work at their own pace on all four stations or work in groups [Tucker, 2018]. All depend on lesson plans developed by a teacher.

If students work individually and move from one station to another at their own pace, some stations may be overloaded if several students work at one pace. Waiting students may select another station and later return to that one when it is not so loaded. When students work in groups you may not always guarantee that each lesson will take an equal period of time, but you may reserve several minutes at the end of the lesson so that students may come back and complete any missed exercises

One more modern approach to teaching Russian as a foreign language where e-educational resources are used is the so-called Flipped classroom. Such an approach requires traditional lectures or lessons to be held at home, as time in the classroom is devoted to studying target language, Russian in this case. In other words, lectures and home work are flipped: at home students independently study the theory of a language, and in the classroom they have practice, the use of the language [Evseeva and Solozhenko, 2015]. This concept has existed for many years and many teachers of Russian as a foreign language consider it an important tool for increasing student knowledge level. Let's view some of the most important basics necessary for use of this approach.

The traditional educational environment is flipped in Flipped classroom. In particular, students study fundamental concepts at home — frequently

watching recorded lectures — and this gives time for interactive lessons and practical works in the classroom that in a general approach will be given as a home work.

The approach appeared as a result of pedagogical research at the end of the 1990's and beginning of the 2000's and strengthened as a methodology a decade after. Basic papers in flipped classroom philosophy include the Flip-flip concept by J. Wesley Baker where use of web-technologies with the purpose of implementation of home theoretical training is highlighted that enables a teacher to perform active language training in the classroom [Hamdan, McKnight, McKnight, Arfstrom, 2015].

Why does this approach work so efficiently for teaching Russian as a foreign language? We all know that there is no better way to fluently use a language than to practice speaking and auditing on it and this is right the element that is paid much time in a flipped classroom. Students study fundamental concepts at their own pace at home and are ready to use them further in the classroom. Moreover, due to the practice directed by a teacher, students have less chance to develop incorrect pronunciation and grammar habits that sometimes may appear during performance of homework. Flipped classrooms are also useful for teachers of Russian as a foreign language from the point of view of differentiation. Instead of adaptation of a lecture or lesson to all various training styles and abilities in the class, you may offer group and individual work, check it with students and assess their work during the lesson [Zolotkykh and Tsyu, 2018].

Online video channels (YouTube, as a rule) where students may access a teacher's video are the most efficient and popular e-resource in this type of training. Dropbox or Google Drive offer possibilities for storing video and online educational materials for students. For audio lectures you may use memory sticks as well as special software. As a visual component that may attract students' attention in this case is unavailable, you may add graphics so that students may follow them. You may use such software as Screencast in order to record your voice, as well as PC screen in online mode. Thus, you will be able to discuss a slide-show, for example. As for online presentations, their use assists in basing lessons on easy-learned portions of information as well as easily integrating contingency tables of visual materials/ diagrams/ verbs, etc.

If students may see video lectures and lessons at home but it is difficult for them to record their own video due to lack of time, unavailability

of a recording device or any other reason, you may always use existing videos on the specified topic. Large resources include online open educational programs [Khromov, Gulyaeva, Apalkov, Nikonova, 2015; Rusetskaya 2015; Listiana, Jaharadak, 2019]. Content is placed in mass open online courses, social networks, various distant courses and on various popular platforms for studying Russian as a foreign language (Universarium, UNUWEB, Dist-learn.ru, Speak-russian.cie.ru, etc.). Course “Uspeh+” (A1) developed by authors from St. Petersburg State University (<http://elementaryrussian.spbu.ru/index.html>) stands apart from others. Friendly navigation, illustrations — strips help students to study Russian grammar faster and more efficiently.

Among test web-sites efficient and popular are tests by L. L. Babalova “Practice on grammar (Russian as a foreign language, levels A2, B1)” (<http://rustest-online.ru/soderzhanie/>), a set of tests by LA University (UCLA Russian Flagship Language Skills Lounge, <http://www.russian.ucla.edu/flagship/russianflagship/Welcome.html>), various official web-sites with training tests (testcons.ru, gct-msu.ru).

E-educational materials or digital materials within the framework of teaching Russian as a foreign language include materials using a PC or other technological devices used by teachers during lessons. Examples of such types of materials include digital gaming platforms as well as any digital materials developed by authors of textbooks for studying Russian as a foreign language. For such purposes e-educational materials include activity on a digital platform in the form of training games for interactive boards (IWB), SMART boards. Other possible e-educational resources used by students include e-versions of their textbooks (e-textbooks) as well as e-educational materials in the form of video materials or applications for tablets, such as iPad.

Moreover, some modern e-textbooks are interactive. Such e-materials make it easy to register students. These multi module materials give content for those who primarily wish to improve reading skills. Some e-books contain audio, for example, short tracks or audio effects for listeners. Exercises may be integrated into e-educational materials, for example, using tasks requiring students to move along an interactive desk. Recently, interactive platforms for teaching Russian as a foreign language have gained popularity. One is Kahoot!, an educational platform used for checking students’ knowledge for forming a final credit or as a non-traditional lesson in the classroom. This is one of the most popular gaming platforms for education having 70 million active unique users

per month [Lunden, 2018; Licorish, Owen, Daniel and George, 2018]. As of 2019, over 2.5 billion people from over 200 countries use the Kahoot! Platform for studying foreign languages. It positively influences performance, dynamics in the class, attitudes and perceptions of pupils and teachers. The concept of this platform is to combine existing educational technical infrastructure, digital devices, social networks and games into one educational platform. The purpose is to increase involvement, motivation, pleasure and concentration in order to increase performance and dynamics in the classroom.

When Kahoot! was launched, it differed from other SRS as it focused on being a gaming platform and therefore to be classified as a game-based student reaction system (GSRS) [Nicolaidou, 2018; Wang Alf Inge, RabailTahir, 2020].

But from the moment of the launch several SRS made game functions a part of their platform. One platform with characteristics similar to Kahoot! — Socrative — gives an online formative assessment for collection of data from students via various forms and offers a game Space Race where student teams answer questions in order to move a rocket more quickly on the screen. Another example is Quizlet, where students may study various topics using cards, orthography, tests. Quizlet is focused on writing words and gives correct word definitions. Quizizz is a gaming platform for education similar to Kahoot! where the main difference is that students' devices show questions and answers and there is no need to use a projected screen, and answer sessions are not synchronized, that means that a student shall not wait for other students to pass to a next question [Chaiyo, Nokham, 2017]. The main difference of all the systems specified above is that Kahoot! pays more attention to interaction via gaming experience.

Use of one more popular platform — Moodle — is ideal for integration of educational facilities in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Moodle is a module object-focused dynamic educational environment that is a free software platform for e-education with open source code. Some research has named this environment a source management system (CMS) or a virtual learning environment (VLE). It enables students to study out of the classroom though a teacher is still necessary in order to ensure the planning and preparation processes. Moodle is one of the preferred types as an educational method based on digital mass information media that is developed using proper pedagogical principles. Moreover, the Moodle environment is focused on student training experience improvement and is developed with a constructive pedagogical structure. Out of all the above-mentioned factors,



the main factor which plays a role of Moodle as an educational method is that teachers of Russian as a foreign language may easily access this software on its webpage and freely create a page for their own course.

Teachers of Russian as a foreign language may find assistance in creating fascinating lessons on language study using the Moodle platform on various websites. There are a lot of examples for adaptation of lessons to a specific group in virtual learning environments [Shchitov, 2015]. Most teachers use the Moodle platform for support and integration of traditional actions on studying Russian as a foreign language. By using Moodle you can easily create educational tasks.

Tools granted by Moodle may be used for integration with any level course, performance of additional work and shared education. As a bundle of an educational program and educational system, Moodle has a high potential in supporting general training as well as in performing additional out-of-classroom work in order to become a supply system for mixed (or hybrid) format courses or even for use as a separate e-educational platform. Thus, Moodle and its platform may be used for integration of a language course enabling students to join modules and gain new experiences. A teacher may ask them to perform tasks on this platform to gain credits or marks that will influence a final credit.

This platform enables a teacher to structure lessons so that each language skill may be used, and after that they may invite their students to join an integration course [Aikina, Sumtsova, Pavlov, 2015]. Moreover, Moodle functions make it possible to perform various types of test. Here are only some types of quiz relating to teaching Russian as a foreign language: multiple choice, right/wrong, matchings, descriptions. A wide range of options makes it possible to randomize questions and elements with several answers, specify time availability limits, select if students receive feedback or not, and decide whether they may view correct answers, etc.

As the purpose is not to replace traditional textbooks, but to integrate them with the e-education environment, performance of the following steps will assist in creating a module or sections in the platform and ensure necessary cooperation. In the beginning a teacher shall select some units of a textbook (or textbooks) that will be deemed as educational objects (module digital resources that are uniquely identified and may be used, including re-use, for support of the students). The main idea of such educational objects is that content is divided into small parts that may be used in various educational environments. Some audio materials may be stored in the form of audio

files in a catalog that will be used as a resource. Short videos in a specified succession may offer dialogues, corresponding to selected units. Many sites on studying Russian as a foreign language contain such videos. Moreover, there is access to material that may be downloaded from the platform.

Additional audio materials shall be prepared, such as exercises on listening, auditing, and answers to such tasks may be sent to the teacher for correction by e-mail or recorded by students and shared on the platform part where other students may have access for listening and discussion in a chat. A separate section of Moodle offers the possibility to create various quizzes. Teachers who know Macromedia Flash or similar software may create interactive webpages with such exercises as Moving, Right/ Wrong, etc. Each section may contain links to websites with multiple exercises. A teacher shall pay attention to introduce more interactive work for cooperation and feedback.

An assessment system may include several types of tests. At the end of each test a student may receive a credit that is added to total credits on this subject. Additional credits may be given for the frequency with which students attend the platform and the part where they may share information. Exercises in Moodle are mainly interactive and may be marked independently. The specific platform part may be used as a forum where students may write their doubts, and the teacher gives explanations. The tutor may suggest solving questions asked by other students and in another part you may freely communicate in Russian.

In order to avoid an unbalance between oral and written skills, you ought to be careful using tools which enable voice recording and oral messages. You may ask students to call and record this call or interview a class friend and download the recording to the platform.

If we speak about the problem of cooperation with web-content, you may start with adding links to websites to Moodle. Initially you may use simple ones, for example, with information about travel, so that students may ask and specify routes (many cities have travel planners for public transportation via Internet). You may ask students to use them for online shopping in order to find gifts for their friends by giving them, for instance, 1000 rubles. The main idea is to make situations as close to real language situations as possible.

Forums are the best for fluent communication, but as the text is visible there, they are also good for identification of student mistakes. Although on-line correction of accuracy on a public forum is probably mistaken, you may print the page out for each student and mark your corrections. For students

with a low level of language assurance or accuracy in studying Russian, you may use a forum in order to make them plan a conversation that later may be trained in the classroom. For students with a higher level of language it is recommended to use forums for practice. For example, you may add several links for information about travels and tourism, suggesting places a tourist may visit and the best way to get there (of course, justifying your choice in Russian). You may also ask students to find courses they would wish to study and vacancies they like and explain why they are interested or why they consider that they match them. This may be an excellent way to make students practice Russian out of the classroom.

As for developing writing, Moodle is good. Something like Wikipedias may be useful here. Although most Wikis are publicly available, Moodle enables setting individual Wikis for each student and teacher. They may be used to create shared documents between a student and a teacher. As both have equal access, the teacher may easily login and setup feedback. In future this may lead to creation of a longer written text. Not only this, but the whole history of text development may be traced and extracted and may be used by students in order to think about the process of creating written texts in Russian. Public Wikis may be created in order to force students to cooperate in the project or for mutual correction; students often strive to share content created by themselves.

Multimedia content management is one more advantage of Moodle in teaching Russian as a foreign language. One of the main advantages of Moodle use is that it processes multimedia files. It is easy to insert video files from YouTube or add other audio files but the real strength of this approach is to encourage students to make videos themselves and download their videos onto Moodle. If you download FLV or MP3-file onto Moodle and make a reference to it on the page, it is shown in the inbuilt player. Then you can easily make exercises with feedback suggesting students to think over the use of language, selection of grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. If you perform this regularly within a course, this will let students create a portfolio and notice improvement of their language skills.

Beside all the specified above characteristics, Moodle is an excellent organizational tool. This is a good way to combine marks, student performance, individual educational plans, useful links, etc.

E-educational resources combining full time teaching of language in the classroom with due use of technologies are the way for practical use

of a combined education. Some research says that implementation of such technologies and their practice should be planned so as to be an integral part of teaching and study and not be isolated from the rest of learning. So, for the purposes of integration, we need to investigate problems and advantages with which teachers and foreign students studying Russian may face in such systems before as well as after implementation.

#### **4. Conclusions**

New approaches to education are directed at the enlargement and widening of student educational possibilities. Fast technological change and development has presented new possibilities for developing various types of courses for teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language. Web-courses are one such project where they may be independent for teaching/ studying or combined into a current educational process. Moreover, when computers entered the educational environment, e-education appeared that offered educational websites for educational scenarios, creation of working lists, interactive exercises and many other tools for students. This tendency was and still is efficient in order to give students the advantages of studying at their own pace. Such modern approaches in teaching and studying Russian as a foreign language are Station Rotation and Flipped Classroom where e-educational resources are used to promote efficient combined education.

As we can see, use of e-educational recourses is becoming more and more general in teaching Russian as a foreign language, and there are more variants to make standard lessons more vivid. Modern e-educational resources promote education out of the framework of subject limits and together operate as a community promoting efficient education. Some methodological experiments performed by researchers prove that using “complex use of audio visual and technical educational facilities during classroom lessons increase the scope of language material learned by the students (an increase from 10 to 35 %), the scope of learned country-related information is increased by 2–2.5 times” [Vyazovskaya, Danilevskaya, Trubchaninova, 2020, 74].

At present one of the main purposes is to establish and view teaching and studying foreign languages (Russian, in this case) as a continuous process. It is important to show students that education is performed out of the classroom and they study not only for an educational institution or to pass tests.

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